

## **Partnering with Others**

Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation

Partnerships offer opportunities to accomplish goals that might otherwise be unattainable or more difficult to attain. Partnerships can include agreements, cooperative ventures, joint arrangements, alliances, coalitions, and collaborations.

Partners can include other non-profits in your area, civic organizations, schools or universities, religious institutions, government entities, recreation organizations, interest groups.

### **Advantages of Partnerships**

Save resources—human, monetary, and other  
Reduce duplication of services  
Fosters collaboration  
Gain public support  
Raise credibility  
Increase visibility  
Increase networking opportunity  
Increased potential funding support

Working with partners requires some effort, so venture into it on a small scale initially, tackling bigger projects at a later date.

1. Identify who you can partner with based upon your goals and work plan. Brainstorm possible partners.
2. Determine what you want to gain from the partnership and what expectations you have for a partnership.
3. Meet with potential partners to explain project and explore the pros and cons.
4. Decide who will do what. Clearly outline responsibilities in writing and what resources each of you will contribute.

### **Possible Partnerships**

**Grants**—grants are often easier to obtain when working with a number of partners. For example, perhaps you would like to develop a disc golf course at Park X. A potential partner could be the local disc golf club.

**Programming**—cooperative recreation, education, and special events programs may be improved with an increased number of volunteers, money and supplies available from a partnership.

**Publication**—such as shared space in a newsletter. For example, perhaps your park has a number of special interest groups in addition to the friends group. Resources could be pooled for one newsletter that would be a more effective publication promoting the park, events, etc. that would also reach a broader audience, thereby increasing your profile.

**Sponsorships of events**—this may defray costs and work load while increasing creativity and access to resources. Example: The PPF cosponsors, with the Keystone Trails Association, two hiking events per year. We share costs, publicity and work load.

Training—training budgets for volunteers is often limited, so when outside trainers are used, it might be best to work with similar organizations that would also benefit from the training.  
Example: Working with your local recreation center to host a trail maintenance workshop.

Purchases—often bulk purchases are less costly than small orders.

### **Pitfalls**

If organizations don't pay careful attention to why they are coming together and how to make their partnership work, there is a strong possibility that the endeavor will fail. It is important to understand WHY you want to partner and chose partners with mutual objectives. It is also important to clarify expectations of all partners in the beginning to avoid confusion later.

### **Guidelines**

- Clarify Expectations – Develop an understanding of the shared goals and how you hope to achieve them. Understand the commitments that you are making and what the partner is bringing to the table. Set a reasonable time frame for the project and the partnership.
- Understand how you will work together- Establish agreements on who will play what role, who is responsible for key results, how decisions will be made and how progress will be measured. By focusing on these issues at the beginning, many of the problems common to partnerships can be avoided or minimized.
- Periodic Assessment—how is the partnership working? Do roles need to be redefined?
- Finalizing - Very often, little attention is paid to the final stages of a relationship. How will partnership close? How will success be measured? Celebrate your success.